

Chapter IV.

Agriculture.

Crops.

cucumber tree, *bimbali*, *Averrhoa bilimbi*, is small with oblong fruit growing on the trunk and branches. The Indian almond, *badāmi*, *Terminalia catappa*, is found both in gardens and forests. The Belgaum walnut, *akrodu*, *Alentris triloba*, grows freely above the Sahyādris. The cashewnut, *geru māvu*, *Anacardium occidentale*, a native of Brazil, is now common in Goa and on the Kánara coast, where it is considered a valuable article of food. A good gum is obtained by cutting the bark.

Bad Seasons.

Though North Kánara has occasionally suffered from a failure of crops the only recorded or remembered scarcity which amounted to famine was in the year A.D. 1806 or the *Kshaya Samvatsara*¹. This famine appears to have been very severe. Men were forced to feed on roots and on rice husks, and about 3000 persons are said to have died of want. The local scarcity was originally caused by an influx of people from Ratnágiri and the Deccan. It was increased by the want of roads, by the depredations of robbers, and by a rule forbidding the export of grain from Dhárwār. The distress lasted for about fifteen months from January 1805 to March 1806. To relieve the distress an order was issued forbidding the export of rice and directing the purchase of rice by the local officers and its re-sale at moderate prices. The land assessment was remitted, and advances were made to cultivators for agricultural purposes. This famine and the scarcities with which since then the district has occasionally been visited seem to have been due to short rainfall. In 1865-66 parts of the Nizām's country, Dhárwār, Belgaum, and Kánara suffered from the extremely high price of grain which was due partly to short rainfall, and partly to the transfer of a large area of land from grain crops to cotton. In Supa the distress was severe enough to call for special relief measures. The pressure was greatly relieved by the seeding of the large bamboo over fifteen to twenty miles on either side of the Haliyál-Yellápur road. Thousands of scarcity-pinched people from the Karnátak came to gather the bamboo seed. They lived in large camps and were accompanied by their own Váni shopkeepers. The shopkeepers bartered their wares for the bamboo seed at the rate of about forty pounds the rupee and sent the seed to the inland markets where grain was dearest.² Though there was no general failure of crops in Kánara, the effects of the great famine of 1876 and 1877 in the Deccan, Bombay Karnátak, Maisur, and Madras were felt for about three years in Kánara. During this famine Kánara relieved about 10,000 famine-stricken people and 3000 cattle from the Bombay Karnátak. These people found employment in Haliyál, Yellápur, and Sirsi in deepening ponds, in repairing roads, and in other public works. The cattle were allowed to graze in the reserved forest. Those who were unable to work were fed at relief kitchens in Haliyál, Mundgod, Yellápur, and Sirsi. In 1876-77 the rainfall was plentiful in June and July but failed almost entirely in the succeeding months, so that, except on the coast where the rice crop was good, crops failed

¹ Colonel Etheridge's Report on the Famines of the Bombay Presidency, 1868.

² Colonel W. Peyton, Conservator of Forests S.D.

to some extent, and much distress was felt for want of water. The public health was injured by the influx of famine-stricken people from the Bombay Karnáta to the unhealthy climate of the Kánara forests and many died of cholera and fever. The rupee price of the second sort of rice rose from twenty-eight pounds in 1875-76 to twenty-two in 1876-77. Instead of large exports of cotton and grain, there were grain imports of about 18,000 tons (72,000 *khandis*) to Kárwár and of 18,750 tons (75,000 *khandis*) to Kumta. The general condition of the people was fair, for though the poorer husbandmen suffered to some extent, those on the coast who were better off and whose crops were good, made large profits from the enhanced prices. In 1877-78 rain failed in July and August and was excessively heavy in October. Public health was bad. The rupee price of the second sort of rice rose from twenty-two pounds in 1876-77 to eighteen in 1877-78. The export trade which had almost ceased in 1876-77, revived. In 1878-79, the year of the heaviest recorded rainfall (132·89 inches), the crops were good, but public health suffered severely from excessive moisture. Though the wages of labour showed no change, the effect of the famine was still felt in the price of food grains which, except *náchni* Eleusine corocana, were even dearer than in 1877-78. The rupee price of rice rose from eighteen pounds in 1877-78 to seventeen in 1878-79. In 1879-80 the price fell to twenty pounds.

The crops in some villages are occasionally injured by blights, and by the ravages of rats, insects, and worms. But within the experience of the present generation these losses have never affected the general harvest. In some lowlands near rivers heavy rainfall and a stormy sea sometimes cause floods which greatly damage the crops. In 1831 and again in 1848, owing to tempestuous weather, the Honávar coast lands were flooded with salt water and the crops destroyed.

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